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research and statistics note

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SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS ISSUED, 1976-79*

Social Security numbers (SSN's) were first issued in November 1936 as a means of uniquely identifying the earnings records of workers covered by the Social Security program. By the end of 1975, over 235 million SSN's had been issued since the beginning of the program. There were an estimated 180 million living SSN holders.

In 1976 the number of issuances was over 9 million, only a 10-percent increase over the preceding year (table 1). Issuances declined each year thereafter to about 5.2 million in 1979, the lowest number issued in a single year since 1962 when 4.5 million SSN's had been issued. The sharp decline, about 33 percent from 1977 to 1979, occurred about the same time (mid-1978) that the Social Security Administration instituted new regulations requiring all persons applying for an original SSN, regardless of age, to submit satisfactory proof of age, identity, and citizenship or alien status. The monthly issuance figures are regrouped into 12-month periods commencing in June 1976 and ending in May 1980 below.

Period	*Number of original SSN issuances*
June 1976-May 1977	9,043,387
June 1977-May 1978	7,004,547
June 1978-May 1979	4,584,016
June 1979-May 1980	5,720,019

These figures, which show a dip in the volume of issuances during the June 1978-May 1979 period, suggest that the new identification requirements may have caused many persons who did not have immediate need for an original SSN to delay assembling the required documents.

The largest proportion of SSN's issued in each year 1976-79 went to persons under 15 years of age (table 2). This continues the trend that began in 1973 when issuances to that age group first reached more than 50 percent. The peak year was 1976 when issuances to persons under 15 was 73 percent.

Although the total number of issuances declined during the 1976-79 period, the number of issuances to persons 20-29 and 30-59 showed yearly increases. Because only immigrants replenish the reserve of adults without SSN's, these increases can be partly attributed to the increase in the level of immigration.[1] Issuances for nonimmigration purposes to persons aged 20 and older were approximately 200,000 in 1976 and 1977.

*By Felix Bamberger, Division of OASDI Statistics.

[1]Social Security numbers were issued to all legal immigrants to the United States until March 1978. Thereafter, immigrants were given Social Security material and told to apply for an SSN. The numbers of immigrants aged 20 and older for 1976, 1977, and January-September 1978 were 275,000; 330,000; and 315,000, respectively. Source: Immigration and Naturalization Service, U.S. Department of Justice.

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TABLE 1.—Social Security numbers issued, by sex of applicants, 1937-79

(In thousands)

Year	Total	Male	Female
1937[1]	37,139	26,981	10,158
1938	6,304	4,010	2,294
1939	5,555	3,291	2,264
1940	5,227	3,080	2,147
1941	6,678	3,702	2,976
1942	7,637	3,547	4,090
1943	7,426	2,905	4,521
1944	4,537	1,830	2,707
1945	3,321	1,506	1,815
1946	3,022	1,432	1,590
1947	2,728	1,299	1,429
1948	2,720	1,305	1,415
1949	2,340	1,113	1,227
1950	2,891	1,406	1,485
1951	4,927	2,420	2,507
1952	4,363	2,292	2,071
1953	3,464	1,664	1,800
1954	2,743	1,299	1,444
1955	4,323	2,304	2,019
1956	4,376	2,391	1,985
1957	3,639	1,793	1,846
1958	2,920	1,384	1,536
1959	3,388	1,645	1,743
1960	3,415	1,663	1,752
1961	3,370	1,665	1,705
1962	4,519	2,109	2,410
1963	8,617	3,739	4,878
1964	5,623	2,707	2,916
1965	6,131	2,746	3,385
1966	6,506	2,894	3,612
1967	5,920	2,855	3,065
1968	5,862	2,856	3,006
1969	6,289	3,105	3,184
1970	6,132	3,004	3,128
1971	6,401	3,122	3,279
1972	9,564	3,948	5,616
1973	10,038	4,849	5,189
1974	7,998	3,950	4,048
1975	8,164	3,992	4,172
1976	9,043	4,507	4,536
1977	7,724	3,872	3,852
1978	5,260	2,682	2,578
1979	5,213	2,649	2,564

[1] Includes issuances in November and December 1936

TABLE 2.—Social Security numbers issued by age group, race, and sex, 1976-79

(Number in thousands)

Characteristic	1976		1977		1978		1979	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Age								
Total	9,043	100.0	7,724	100.0	5,260	100.0	5,213	100.0
Male	4,512	49.9	3,875	50.2	2,684	51.0	2,652	50.9
Female	4,531	50.1	3,849	49.8	2,576	49.0	2,562	49.1
Under 15	6,609	73.1	5,401	69.9	3,396	64.6	3,274	62.8
Male	3,378	37.4	2,773	35.9	1,754	33.3	1,688	32.4
Female	3,231	35.7	2,629	34.0	1,641	31.2	1,585	30.4
15-19	1,931	21.4	1,778	23.0	1,345	25.6	1,367	26.2
Male	933	10.3	870	11.3	670	12.7	673	12.9
Female	997	11.0	908	11.8	676	12.9	694	13.3
20-29	230	2.5	252	3.3	260	4.9	278	5.3
Male	110	1.2	126	1.6	141	2.7	149	2.9
Female	120	1.3	125	1.6	119	2.3	129	2.5
30-59	207	2.3	210	2.7	213	4.0	244	4.7
Male	76	.8	90	1.2	104	2.0	123	2.4
Female	131	1.4	120	1.6	108	2.1	121	2.3
60-64	26	.3	22	.3	17	.3	18	.3
Male	5	.1	6	.1	5	.1	7	.1
Female	10	.2	17	.2	12	.2	12	.2
65 and over	40	.4	60	.8	30	.6	33	.6
Male	10	.1	10	.1	10	.2	12	.2
Female	30	.3	50	.6	20	.4	21	.4
Race[1]								
Total	9,043	100.0	7,724	100.0	5,260	100.0	5,213	100.0
White	6,494	71.8	5,846	75.7	4,040	76.8	3,895	74.7
Black	1,922	21.3	1,333	17.3	771	14.7	762	14.6
Other	626	6.9	545	7.1	449	8.5	556	10.7
Male	4,512	49.9	3,875	50.2	2,684	51.0	2,652	50.9
White	3,256	36.0	2,947	38.2	2,066	39.3	1,985	38.1
Black	948	10.5	657	8.5	386	7.3	381	7.3
Other	308	3.4	271	3.5	232	4.4	285	5.5
Female	4,531	50.1	3,849	49.8	2,576	49.0	2,562	49.1
White	3,238	35.8	2,898	37.5	1,974	37.5	1,910	36.6
Black	974	10.8	676	8.8	385	7.3	380	7.3
Other	318	3.5	274	3.5	217	4.1	271	5.2

[1] Persons with unreported race are classified as white. A recent study by the Statistics Division, which used the matched records of the Bureau of the Census and the Social Security Administration, indicates that 95 percent of the workers with unreported race in 1972 were white.

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